FERD. ONGANIA
LIBRAIO DELLA REAL CASA
VENEZIA

AT/NK
H510

N242

Transmitted from
Gertrude

June 1912 –

Smith 176 lists the
Am. w/ 2 illus.
w/ 7 photos + Science possibilities

THE
TURQUOISE CUP
&c.

THE TURQUOISE CUP

AND

THE DESERT

BY

ARTHUR COSSLETT SMITH

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON: JOHN LANE

1903

Copyright, 1903, *by Charles Scribner's Sons*
for the United States of America
Printed by D. B. Updike, The Merrymount Press
Boston, U. S. A.

"KHADIJA BELIEVES IN ME"

CONTENTS

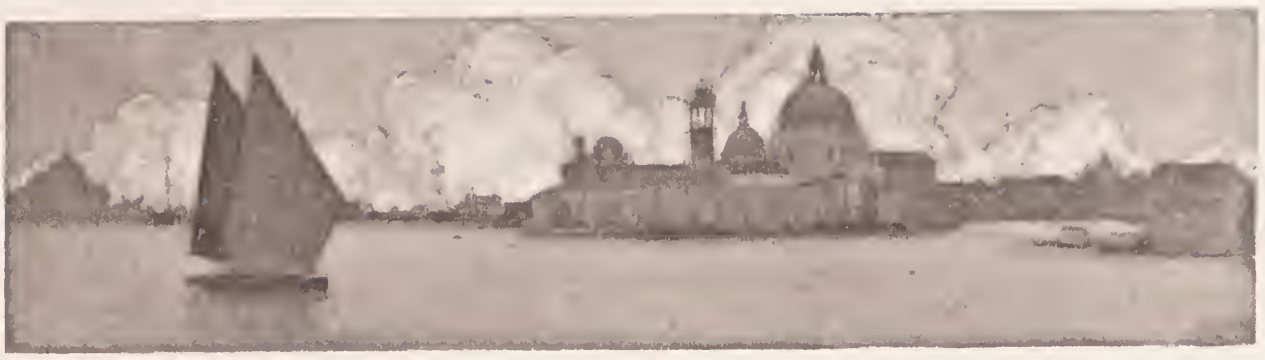
I

The Turquoise Cup 3

II

The Desert 107

THE TURQUOISE CUP



THE TURQUOISE CUP

THE Cardinal Archbishop sat on his shaded balcony, his well-kept hands clasped upon his breast, his feet stretched out so straight before him that the pigeon, perched on the rail of the balcony, might have seen fully six inches of scarlet silk stocking.

The cardinal was a small man, but very neatly made. His hair was as white as spun glass. Perhaps he was sixty; perhaps he was seventy; perhaps he was fifty. His red biretta lay upon a near-by chair. His head bore no tonsure. The razor of the barber

and the scythe of Time had passed him by. There was that faint tinge upon his cheeks that comes to those who, having once had black beards, shave twice daily. His features were clearly cut. His skin would have been pallid had it not been olive. A rebellious lock of hair curved upon his forehead. He resembled the first Napoleon, before the latter became famous and fat.

The pigeon's mate came floating through the blue sky that silhouetted the trees in the garden. She made a pretence of alighting upon the balcony railing, sheered off, coquetted among the tree-tops, came back again, retreated so far that she was merely a white speck against the blue vault, and then, true to her sex, having proved her liberty only to tire of it, with a flight so swift that the eye could scarcely follow her, she came back again

and rested upon the farther end of the balcony, where she immediately began to preen herself and to affect an air of nonchalance and virtue.

Her mate lazily opened one eye, which regarded her for a moment, and then closed with a wink.

"Ah, my friends," said the cardinal, "there are days when you make me regret that I am not of the world, but this is not one of them. You have quarrelled, I perceive. When you build your nest down yonder in the cote, I envy you. When you are giving up your lives to feeding your children, I envy you. I watch your flights for food for them. I say to myself, 'I, too, would struggle to keep a child, if I had one. Commerce, invention, speculation—why could I not succeed in one of these? I have arrived in the most intricate profession of all. I am a cardinal

archbishop. Could I not have been a stock-broker?' Ah, signore and signora," and he bowed to the pigeons, "you get nearer heaven than we poor mortals. Have you learned nothing—have you heard no whisper—have you no message for me?"

"Your eminence," said a servant who came upon the balcony, a silver tray in his hand, "a visitor."

The cardinal took the card and read it aloud—"The Earl of Vauxhall."

He sat silent a moment, thinking. "I do not know him," he said at length; "but show him up."

He put on his biretta, assumed a more erect attitude, and then turned to the pigeons.

"Adieu," he said; "commercialism approaches in the person of an Englishman. He comes either to buy or to sell. You have nothing in common with him. Fly

away to the Piazza, but come back to-morrow. If you do not, I shall miss you sorely."

The curtains parted, and the servant announced, "The Earl of Vauxhall."

The cardinal rose from his chair.

A young man stepped upon the balcony. He was tall and lithe and blond, and six-and-twenty.

"Your grace," he said, "I have come because I am in deep trouble."

"In that event," said the cardinal, "you do me much honor. My vocation is to seek out those who are in trouble. When *they* seek *me* it argues that I am not unknown. You are an Englishman. You may speak your own language. It is not the most flexible, but it is an excellent vehicle for the truth."

"Thank you," said the young man; "that gives me a better chance, since my

Italian is of the gondolier type. I speak it mostly with my arms," and he began to gesticulate.

"I understand," said the cardinal, smiling, "and I fear that my English is open to some criticism. I picked it up in the University of Oxford. My friends in the Vatican tell me that it is a *patois*."

"I dare say," said the young man. "I was at Cambridge."

"Ah," said the cardinal, "how unfortunate. Still, we may be able to understand one another. Will you have some tea? It is a habit I contracted in England, and I find it to be a good one. I sit here at five o'clock, drink my cup of tea, feed the pigeons that light upon the railing, and have a half-hour in which to remember how great is England, and" — with a bow — "how much the rest of the world owes to her."

"A decent sort of chap, for an Italian," thought the earl. The cardinal busied himself with the tea-pot.

"Your grace," said the earl, finally, "I came here in trouble."

"It cannot be of long standing," said the cardinal. "You do not look like one who has passed through the fire."

"No," said the earl, "but I scarcely know what to say to you. I am embarrassed."

"My son," said the cardinal, "when an Englishman is embarrassed he is truly penitent. You may begin as abruptly as you choose. Are you a Catholic?"

"No," replied the earl, "I am of the Church of England."

The cardinal shrugged his shoulders the least bit. "I never cease to admire your countrymen," he said. "On Sundays they say, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic

Church,' and, on work-days, they say, 'I believe in the Holy Anglican Church.' You are admirably trained. You adapt yourselves to circumstances."

"Yes," said the earl, a trifle nettled, "I believe we do, but at present I find myself as maladroit as though I had been born on the Continent—in Italy, for example."

"Good," laughed the cardinal; "I am getting to be a garrulous old man. I love to air my English speech, and, in my effort to speak it freely, I sometimes speak it beyond license. Can you forgive me, my lord, and will you tell me how I can serve you?"

"I came," said the Earl of Vauxhall, "to ask you if there is any way in which I can buy the turquoise cup."

"I do not understand," said the cardinal.

"The turquoise cup," repeated the earl. "The one in the treasury of St. Mark's."

The cardinal began to laugh—then he suddenly ceased, looked hard at the earl and asked, "Are you serious, my lord?"

"Very," replied the earl.

"Are you quite well?" asked the cardinal.

"Yes," said the earl, "but I am very uncomfortable."

The cardinal began to pace up and down the balcony.

"My lord," he asked, finally, "have you ever negotiated for the Holy Coat at Treves; for the breastplate of Charlemagne in the Louvre; for the Crown Jewels in the Tower?"

"No," said the earl; "I have no use for them, but I very much need the turquoise cup."

"Are you a professional or an amateur?"

asked the cardinal, his eyes flashing, his lips twitching.

"As I understand it," said the earl, slowly, a faint blush stealing into his cheeks, "an 'amateur' is a lover. If that is right, perhaps you had better put me down as an 'amateur.'"

The cardinal saw the blush and his anger vanished.

"Ah," he said, softly, "there is a woman, is there?"

"Yes," replied the earl, "there is a woman."

"Well," said the cardinal, "I am listening."

"It won't bore you?" asked the earl. "If I begin about her I sha'n't know when to stop."

"My lord," said the cardinal, "if there were no women there would be no priests. Our occupation would be gone. There was

a time when *men* built churches, beautified them, and went to them. How is it now; even here in Venice, where art still exists, and where there is no bourse? I was speaking with a man only to-day—a man of affairs, one who buys and sells, who has agents in foreign lands and ships on the seas; a man who, in the old religious days, would have given a tenth of all his goods to the Church and would have found honor and contentment in the remainder; but he is bitten with this new-fangled belief of disbelief. He has a sneaking fear that Christianity has been supplanted by electricity, and he worships Huxley rather than Christ crucified—Huxley!" and the cardinal threw up his hands. "Did ever a man die the easier because he had grovelled at the knees of Huxley? What did Huxley preach? The doctrine of despair. He was the Pope of protoplasm. He beat

his wings against the bars of the unknowable. He set his finite mind the task of solving the infinite. A mere creature, he sought to fathom the mind of his creator. Read the lines upon his tomb, written by his wife—what do they teach? Nothing but 'let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' If a man follows Huxley, then is he a fool if he does not give to this poor squeezed-lemon of a world another twist. If I believed there was nothing after this life, do you think I should be sitting here, feeding the pigeons? Do you think—but there, I have aired my English speech and have had my fling at Huxley. Let me fill your cup and then tell me of this woman whom I have kept waiting all this time by my vanity and my ill manners. Is she English, French, Spanish, or American? There are many Americans nowadays."

"No," said the earl, "she is Irish."

"The most dangerous of all," remarked the cardinal.

"It is plain that you know women," said the earl.

"I?" exclaimed the cardinal. "No; nor any living man."

"Her father," resumed the earl, "was a great brewer in Dublin. He made ripping stout. Perhaps you use it. It has a green label, with a bull's head. He kept straight all through the home-rule troubles, and he chipped in a lot for the Jubilee fund, and they made him Lord Vatsmore. He died two years ago and left one child. She is Lady Nora Daly. She is waiting for me now in the Piazza."

"Perhaps I am detaining you?" said the cardinal.

"By no means," replied the earl. "I don't dare to go back just yet. I met her first at home, last season. I've followed her

about like a spaniel ever since. I started in for a lark, and now I 'm in for keeps. She has a peculiar way with her," continued the earl, smoothing his hat; "one minute you think you are great chums and, the next, you wonder if you have ever been presented."

"I recognize the Irish variety," said the cardinal.

"She is here with her yacht," continued the earl. "Her aunt is with her. The aunt is a good sort. I am sure you would like her."

"Doubtless," said the cardinal, with a shrug; "but have you nothing more to say about the niece?"

"I followed her here," continued the earl, his hands still busy with his hat, "and I've done my best. Just now, in the Piazza, I asked her to marry me, and she laughed. We went into St. Mark's, and the lights

and the music and the pictures and the perfume seemed to soften her. 'Did you mean it?' she said to me. I told her I did. 'Don't speak to me for a little while,' she said, 'I want to think.' That was strange, wasn't it?"

"No," said the cardinal, "I don't think that was strange. I think it was merely feminine."

"We came out of the church," continued the earl, "and I felt sure of her; but when we came into the Piazza and she saw the life of the place, the fountain playing, the banners flying, the pigeons wheeling, and heard the band, she began to laugh and chaff. 'Bobby,' she said, suddenly, 'did you mean it?'

"'Yes,' I said, 'I meant it.' She looked at me for a moment so fixedly that I began to think of the things I had done and which she had not done, of the gulf there

was between us—you understand?"

"Yes," said the cardinal, "I understand—that is, I can imagine."

"And then," continued the earl, "I ventured to look into her eyes, and she was laughing at me.

"'Bobby,' she said, 'I believe I've landed you. I know you're a fortune-hunter, but what blame? I dare say I should be one, but for the beer. I'm throwing myself away. With my fortune and my figure I think I could get a duke, an elderly duke, perhaps, and a little over on his knees, but still a duke. A well-brought-up young woman would take the duke, but I am nothing but a wild Irish girl. Bobby, you are jolly and wholesome, and auntie likes you, and I'll take you—hold hard,' she said, as I moved up—'I'll take you, if you'll give me the turquoise cup.' 'What's that?' I asked. 'The turquoise

cup,' she said; 'the one in the treasury of St. Mark's. Give me that and Nora Daly is yours.' 'All right,' I said, 'I 'll trot off and buy it.'

"Here I am, your grace, an impecunious but determined man. I have four thousand pounds at Coutts's, all I have in the world; will it lift the cup?"

The cardinal rubbed his white hands together, uncrossed and recrossed his legs, struck the arm of his chair, and burst into a laugh so merry and so prolonged that the earl, perforce, joined him.

"It 's funny," said the latter, finally, "but, all the same, it 's serious."

"Oh, Love!" exclaimed the cardinal; "you little naked boy with wings and a bow! You give us more trouble than all the rest of the heathen deities combined —you fly about so—you appear in such strange places—you compel mortals to

do such remarkable things — you debauch my pigeons, and, when the ill is done, you send your victims to me, or another priest, and ask for absolution, so that they may begin all over again."

"Do I get the cup?" asked the earl, with some impatience.

"My lord," said the cardinal, "if the cup were mine, I have a fancy that I would give it to you, with my blessing and my best wishes; but when you ask me to sell it to you, it is as though you asked your queen to sell you the Kohinoor. She dare not, if she could. She could not, if she dare. Both the diamond and the cup were, doubtless, stolen. The diamond was taken in this century; the cup was looted so long ago that no one knows. A sad attribute of crime is that time softens it. There is a mental statute of limitations that converts possession into ownership. 'We stole the Kohinoor

so long ago,' says the Englishman, 'that we own it now.' So it is with the cup. Where did it come from? It is doubtless Byzantine, but where did its maker live; in Byzantium or here, in Venice? We used to kidnap Oriental artists in the good old days when art was a religion. This cup was made by one whom God befriended; by a brain steeped in the love of the beautiful; by a hand so cunning that when it died art languished; by a power so compelling that the treasuries of the world were opened to it. Its bowl is a turquoise, the size and shape of an ostrich's egg, sawn through its longer diameter, and resting on its side. Four gold arms clasp the bowl and meet under it. These arms are set with rubies *en cabochon*, except one, which is cut in facets. The arms are welded beneath the bowl and form the stem. Midway of the stem, and pierced by it, is a diamond, as large"

—the cardinal picked up his teaspoon and looked at it—"yes," he said, "as large as the bowl of this spoon. The foot of the cup is an emerald, flat on the bottom and joined to the stem by a ferrule of transparent enamel. If this treasure were offered for sale the wealth of the world would fight for it. No, no, my lord, you cannot have the cup. Take your four thousand pounds to Testolini, the jeweller, and buy a string of pearls. Very few good women can resist pearls."

"Your grace," said the earl, rising, "I appreciate fully the absurdity of my errand and the kindness of your forbearance. I fear, however, that you scarcely grasp the situation. I am going to marry Lady Nora. I cannot marry her without the cup. You perceive the conclusion—I shall have the cup. Good-by, your grace; I thank you for your patience."

"Good-by," said the cardinal, ringing for a servant. "I wish that I might serve you; but, when children cry for the moon, what is to be done? Come and see me again; I am nearly always at home about this hour."

"I repeat, your grace," said the earl, "that I shall have the cup. All is fair in love and war, is it not?"

There was a certain quality in the earl's voice—that quiet, even note of sincerity which quells riots, which quiets horses, which leads forlorn hopes, and the well-trained ear of the cardinal recognized it.

"Pietro," he said to the servant who answered the bell, "I am going out. My hat and stick. I will go a little way with you, my lord."

They went down the broad stairs together, and the earl noticed, for the first time, that his companion limped.

"Gout?" he asked.

"No," said the cardinal; "the indiscretion of youth. I was with Garibaldi and caught a bullet."

"Take my arm," said the earl.

"Willingly," said the cardinal, "since I know that you will bring me into the presence of a woman worth seeing; a woman who can compel a peer of England to meditate a theft."

"How do you know that?" exclaimed the earl; and he stopped so abruptly that the cardinal put his free hand against his companion's breast to right himself.

"Because," said the cardinal, "I saw your face when you said good-by to me. It was not a pleasant face."

II

THEY went on silently and soon they came to the Piazza.

"I don't see her," said the earl; "perhaps she has gone back to the church."

They crossed the Piazza and entered St. Mark's.

"Not here," said the earl.

They walked up the south aisle and came to the anteroom of the treasury. Its door was open. They entered what had once been a tower of the old palace. The door of the treasury was also open. They went in and found the sacristan and a woman. She held the turquoise cup in her hands.

"Did you buy it, Bobby?" she exclaimed.

She turned and saw that the earl was not alone.

"Your grace," he said, "I present you to Lady Nora Daly."

She bent with a motion half genuflexion, half courtesy, and then straightened herself, smiling.

The cardinal did not notice the obeisance, but he did notice the smile. It seemed to him, as he looked at her, that the treasures of St. Mark's, the jewelled chalices and patens, the agate and crystal vessels, the reliquaries of gold and precious stones, the candlesticks, the two textus covers of golden cloisonné, and even the turquoise cup itself, turned dull and wan and common by comparison with her beauty.

"Your eminence," she said, "you must pardon Bobby's *gaucherie*. He presented you to me and called you 'your grace.' He forgot, or did not know, that you are a cardinal—a prince—and that I should

have been presented to you. Bobby means well, but he is an English peer and a guardsman, so we don't expect much else of Bobby."

"He has done a very gracious thing to-day," said the cardinal. "He has brought me to you."

Lady Nora looked up quickly, scenting a compliment, and ready to meet it, but the cardinal's face was so grave and so sincere that her readiness forsook her and she stood silent.

The earl seemed to be interested in a crucifix of the eleventh century.

"While my lord is occupied with the crucifix," said the cardinal, "will you not walk with me?"

"Willingly," said Lady Nora, and they went out into the church.

"My dear lady," said the cardinal, after an interval of silence, "you are entering

upon life. You have a position, you have wealth, you have youth, you have health, and," with a bow, "you have beauty such as God gives to His creatures only for good purposes. Some women, like Helen of Troy and Cleopatra, have used their beauty for evil. Others, like my Queen, Margarita, and like Mary, Queen of the Scots, have held their beauty as a trust to be exploited for good, as a power to be exercised on the side of the powerless."

"Your eminence," said Lady Nora, "we are now taught in England that Queen Mary was not altogether proper."

"She had beauty, had she not?" asked the cardinal.

"Yes," replied Lady Nora.

"She was beheaded, was she not?" asked the cardinal.

"Yes," said Lady Nora, "and by a very plain woman."

"There you have it!" exclaimed the cardinal. "If Elizabeth had been beautiful and Mary plain, Mary would have kept her head. It is sad to see beautiful women lose their heads. It is sad to see you lose yours."

"Mine?" exclaimed Lady Nora, and she put her hands up to her hat-pins, to reassure herself.

"Yes," said the cardinal, "I fear that it is quite gone."

Lady Nora looked at him with questioning eyes. "Yes," she said, "I must have lost it, for I do not understand you, and I have not always been dull."

"My dear lady," said the cardinal, "the Earl of Vauxhall was good enough to pay me a visit this afternoon."

"Oh," exclaimed Lady Nora, clapping her hands, "if I only could have been behind the curtains! What did he say?"

"He said," replied the cardinal, "that he had asked you to be his wife."

"Indeed he has," said Lady Nora, "and so have others."

"He also said," continued the cardinal, "that you had promised to marry him when he brought you the turquoise cup."

"And so I will," said Lady Nora.

"He proposed to buy the cup," continued the cardinal. "He offered four thousand pounds, which, he said, was all he had in the world."

"Good old Bobby!" exclaimed Lady Nora. "That was nice of him, wasn't it?" and her eyes glistened.

"Yes," said the cardinal, "that was nice of him; but when I had explained how impossible it was to sell the cup he bade me good-by, and, as he was going, said, 'I shall have it. All is fair in love and war.'

I feared then that he meant to take the cup. Since I have seen you I am certain of it."

"What larks!" cried Lady Nora. "Fancy Bobby with a dark lantern, a bristly beard, and a red handkerchief about his neck. All burglars are like that, you know; and then fancy him creeping up the aisle with his johnnie—no, his jimmy—and his felt slippers—fancy Bobby in felt slippers—and he reaches the treasury door, and just then the moon comes up and shines through that window and illuminates the key in St. Peter's hand, and Bobby says, 'An omen,' and he takes out his own key-ring and the first one he tries fits the lock and the door flies open, and Bobby lifts the cup, locks the door, goes down to the steps by the Doge's palace—no gondola—too late, you know, so he puts the cup in his teeth, takes a header,

and swims to the yacht. When he comes alongside they hail him, and he comes up the ladder. 'Where's your mistress?' he asks, and they call me, and I come on deck in my pink *saut du lit*, and there stands Bobby, the water running off him and the cup in his teeth. 'There's your bauble,' he says. (Of course he takes the cup out of his mouth when he speaks.) 'And here's your Nora,' I say, and the boatswain pipes all hands aft to witness the marriage ceremony. No, no, your eminence," she laughed, "it's too good to be true. Bobby will never steal the cup. He has never done anything in all his life but walk down Bond Street. He's a love, but he is not energetic."

"You are doubtless right," said the cardinal, "and my fears are but the timidity of age; still—"

The earl joined them. He had just giv-

en the sacristan ten pounds, and had endeavored to treat the gift as a disinterested *pourboire*. He felt that he had failed; that he had overdone it, and had made himself a marked man. The sacristan followed him—voluble, eulogistic.

"Tommaso," said the cardinal, "this is the Earl of Vauxhall. He is to have every privilege, every liberty. He is to be left alone if he desires it. He is not to be bothered with attendance or suggestions. He may use a kodak; he may handle anything in the treasury. You will regard him as though he were myself."

Tommaso bowed low. The earl blushed.

Lady Nora looked at her watch.

"Five o'clock!" she exclaimed, "and Aunt Molly will be wanting her tea. The launch is at the stairs. Will you come, Bobby? And you, your eminence, will you honor me?"

"Not to-day, my lady," replied the cardinal, "but perhaps some other."

"To-morrow?" she asked.

"Yes," said the cardinal.

"Thank you," said Lady Nora; "the launch will be at the landing at half-past four."

"Is it an electrical contrivance?" asked the cardinal, with a smile.

"Yes," replied Lady Nora.

"Then," said the cardinal, "you need not send it. I will come in my barca. Electricity and the Church are not friendly. We have only just become reconciled to steam."

Lady Nora laughed. "Good-by," she said, "until to-morrow," and again she made her courtesy.

"Until to-morrow," said the cardinal; and he watched them down the aisle.

"Tommaso," he said to the sacristan,

"give me the turquoise cup."

Tommaso handed it to him, silent but wondering.

"Now lock the door," said the cardinal, "and give me the key."

Tommaso complied. The cardinal put the cup under his robe and started down the aisle.

"Tommaso," he said, "you are now closed for the annual cleaning. You understand, do you not?"

"Perfectly, your eminence," replied Tommaso, and then he added—"When a stranger gives me two hundred and fifty lire it is time to lock my door."

The cardinal went out of the church, the turquoise cup under his cassock. He crossed the Piazza slowly, for he was both limping and thinking. He came to the shop of Testolini, the jeweller, under the North arcade, paused a moment, and

entered. The clerks behind the counters sprang to their feet and bowed low.

"Signor Testolini?" asked the cardinal; "is he within?"

"Yes, your eminence," said the head clerk. "He is in his bureau. I will summon him."

"No," said the cardinal, "if he is alone I will go in;" and he opened the door at the back of the shop and closed it behind him. In ten minutes he came out again. Signor Testolini followed, rubbing his hands and bowing at each step.

"Perfectly, your eminence," he said. "I quite understand."

"It must be in my hands in ten days," said the cardinal.

"Ten days!" exclaimed Testolini; "impossible."

"What is that strange word?" said the cardinal; "it must be a vulgarism of New

Italy, that 'impossible.' I do not like it and I will thank you not to use it again when speaking to me. In ten days, Signore."

"Yes, your eminence," said Testolini, "but it will be in the afternoon."

"In ten days," said the cardinal, very quietly.

"Yes, your eminence," said Testolini.

"He looks like Napoleon," whispered the head clerk to his neighbor.

The cardinal went limping down the shop. He had almost reached the door when he stopped and spoke to a little man who stood behind the show-case in which are the enamels.

"Ah, Signore!" he exclaimed, "how come on the wife and baby? I meant to see them this afternoon, but I was diverted. I wish you to continue the same diet for them—take this"--and he fumbled in his pocket, but drew a blank.

"Signor Testolini," he said to the master at his heels, "I find I have no money. Kindly loan me fifty lire. Here," he said to the little man, and he slipped the money into his hand, "plenty of milk for the child;" and he went out of the shop.

"That was not like Napoleon," said the head clerk; and then he added, "Occasionally one meets with a priest who rises superior to his profession."

The little man behind the enamel counter said nothing, but he drew his hand across his eyes.

III

THE following day was a busy one for the cardinal. While Pietro was shaving him he parcelled out the hours.

"What time is it, Pietro?" he asked.

"Three minutes past seven, your eminence."

"Good," said the cardinal; "at half-past I make my mass; at eight, I take my coffee; from eight to ten, my poor—by the way, Pietro, is there any money in the house?"

"Yes, your eminence," said Pietro; "there are eight hundred lire in your desk."

"Take fifty of them to Signor Testolini, in the Piazza, with my thanks," said the cardinal, "and put the rest in my purse. Where was I, Pietro?"

"Your eminence had reached ten o'clock," replied Pietro.

"From ten to eleven," continued the cardinal, "audience for the laity; from eleven to half-past, audience for the clergy; half-past eleven, my egg and a salad. Keep all who look hungry, Pietro, and ask them to take *déjeuner* with me; at twelve, see the architect who is restoring the altar-rail at St. Margaret's; take time to write to the Superior at St. Lazzaro in reference to the proof-sheets of the 'Life of Eusebius'; from one to three, my poor — we must get some more money, Pietro; from three to four—"

"There, your eminence!" exclaimed Pietro, "I have cut you."

"Yes," said the cardinal; "I was about to mention it. Where was I?"

"Your eminence was at four o'clock," replied Pietro.

"Four o'clock already!" exclaimed the cardinal, "and nothing done; from four to half-past four, interview with the treasurer of the diocese. That's a bad half-hour, Pietro. At half-past four I wish the barca to be at the landing. Have the men wear their least shabby liveries. I am to visit the English yacht that lies over by St. Giorgio. You must dress me in my best to-day."

"Alas, your eminence," said Pietro, "your best cassock is two years old."

"How old is the one I wore yesterday?" asked the cardinal.

"Four years at least," said Pietro. "You have your ceremonial dress, but nothing better for the street."

"I caught a glimpse of myself in one of Testolini's mirrors yesterday," said the cardinal, "and I thought I looked rather well."

"Your eminence," said Pietro, "you saw your face and not your coat."

"Pietro," said the cardinal, rising, "you should have turned your hand to diplomacy; you would have gone far."

At half-past four o'clock the cardinal's barca drew up to the molo. The oarsmen were dressed in black, save that their sashes and stockings were scarlet. The bowman landed. It was as though a footman came off the box of a brougham and waited on the curb. While the figures on the clock-tower were still striking the half-hour, the cardinal came limping across the Piazza. The gondoliers at the molo took off their hats and drew up in two lines. The cardinal passed between them, looking each man in the face. He beckoned to one, who left the ranks and came up to him, awkward and sheepish.

"Emilio," said the cardinal, "I have

arranged your matter. You are to pay four lire a week, and are to keep out of the wine-shops. Mind, now, no drinking." To another he said, "I have looked into your case, Marco. You are perfectly right. I have employed counsel for you. Attend to your business and forget your trouble. It is my trouble, now." To a man to whom he beckoned next he spoke differently. "How dare you send me such a petition?" he exclaimed. "It was false from beginning to end. You never served in the legion. The woman you complain of is your lawful wife. You married her in Padua ten years ago. You have been imprisoned for petit theft. You got your gondolier's license by false pretences. Mark you, friends," he said, turning, "here is one of your mates who will bear watching. When he slips, come to me," and he stepped into his barca.

"To the English yacht," he said.

When they arrived they found the Tara dressed in flags, from truck to deck; Lady Nora stood on the platform of the boarding-stairs, and the crew were mustered amidships.

"Your eminence," cried Lady Nora, "you should have a salute if I knew the proper number of guns."

"My dear lady," said the cardinal, taking off his hat, "the Church militant does not burn gunpowder, it fights hand to hand. Come for me at six," he said to his poppe.

"Surely," said Lady Nora, "you will dine with us. We have ices with the Papal colors, and we have a little box for Peter's pence, to be passed with the coffee. I shall be much disappointed if you do not dine with us."

"Wait!" called the cardinal to his barca.

The oarsmen put about. "Tell Pietro," he said, "to feed the pigeons as usual. Tell him to lay crumbs on the balcony railing, and if the cock bird is too greedy, to drive him away and give the hen an opportunity. Come for me at nine."

"Thank you," said Lady Nora; "your poor are now provided for."

"Alas, no," said the cardinal; "my pigeons are my aristocratic acquaintance. They would leave me if I did not feed them. My real poor have two legs, like the pigeons, but God gave them no feathers. They are the misbegotten, the maladroit, the unlucky,—I stand by that word,—the halt, the blind, those with consciences too tender to make their way, reduced gentlefolk, those who have given their lives for the public good and are now forgotten, all these are my poor, and they honor me by their acquaintance. My

pigeons fly to my balcony. My poor never come near me. I am obliged, humbly, to go to them."

"Will money help?" exclaimed Lady Nora; "I have a balance at my banker's."

"No, no, my lady," said the cardinal; "money can no more buy off poverty than it can buy off the bubonic plague. Both are diseases. God sent them and He alone can abate them. At His next coming there will be strange sights. Some princes and some poor men will be astonished."

Just then, a woman, short, plump, red-cheeked and smiling, came toward them. She was no longer young, but she did not know it.

"Your eminence," said Lady Nora, "I present my aunt, Miss O'Kelly."

Miss O'Kelly sank so low that her skirts made what children call "a cheese" on the white deck.

"Your imminence," she said, slowly rising, "sure this is the proud day for Nora, the Tara, and meself."

"And for me, also," said the cardinal. "From now until nine o'clock I shall air my English speech, and I shall have two amiable and friendly critics to correct my mistakes."

"Ah, your imminence," laughed Miss O'Kelly, "I don't speak English. I speak County Clare."

"County Clare!" exclaimed the cardinal; "then you know Ennis? Fifty odd years ago there was a house, just out of the town of Ennis, with iron gates and a porter's lodge. The Blakes lived there."

"I was born in that house," said Miss O'Kelly. "It was draughty, but it always held a warm welcome."

"I do not remember the draught," said the cardinal, "but I do remember the wel-

come. When I was an undergraduate at Oxford, I made a little tour of Ireland, during a long vacation. I had letters from Rome. One of them was to the chapter at Ennis. A young priest took me to that house. I went back many times. There was a daughter and there were several strapping sons. The boys did nothing, that I could discover, but hunt and shoot. They were amiable, however. The daughter hunted, also, but she did many other things. She kept the house, she visited the poor, she sang Irish songs to perfection, and she flirted beyond compare. She had hair so black that I can give you no notion of its sheen; and eyes as blue as our Venetian skies. Her name was Nora—Nora Blake. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen—until yesterday."

"She was my mother!" exclaimed Miss O'Kelly.

"And my grandmother," said Lady Nora.

The cardinal drew a breath so sharp that it was almost a sob, then he took Lady Nora's hand.

"My child," he said, "I am an old man. I am threescore years and ten, and six more, and you bring back to me the happiest days of my youth. You are the image of Nora Blake, yes, her very image. I kiss the images of saints every day," he added, "why not this one?" and he bent and kissed Lady Nora's hand.

There was so much solemnity in the act that an awkward pause might have followed it had not Miss O'Kelly been Irish.

"Your imminence," she said, "since you've told us your age, I'll tell you mine. I'm two-and-twenty and I'm mighty tired of standin'. Let's go aft and have our tay."

They had taken but a few steps when Lady Nora, noticing the cardinal's limp, drew his arm through her own and supported him.

"I know the whole story," she whispered. "You loved my grandmother."

"Yes," said the cardinal, "but I was unworthy."

IV

THEY had their tea, two white-clad stewards serving them. The cardinal took a second cup and then rose and went to the side. He crumbled a biscuit along the rail.

"I have often wondered," he said, "if my pigeons come for me or for my crumbs. Nora Blake used to say that her poor were as glad to see her without a basket as with one. But she was a saint. She saw things more clearly than it is given to us to see them."

The women looked at each other, in silence.

"No," said the cardinal, after an interval, "they do not come; they are as satisfied with Pietro's crumbs as with mine. Love is not a matter of the stomach;" and

he brushed the crumbs overboard. "Perhaps the fishes will get them," he added, "and they will not know whence they came. Anonymous charity," he continued, coming back to his chair, "is the best. It curbs the pride of the giver and preserves the pride of the recipient. Open giving is becoming a trade. It is an American invention. Very rich men in that country offer so much for an object—a college—a hospital—a library—if some one else will give so much. The offer is printed in the newspapers of the land and its originator reaps much—what is the word I wish?—acclaim? no; kudos? no;—ah, yes, advertisement; that is the word. Thank God that charity does not thus masquerade in Italy. There are men here, in poor old Venice, who give half their goods to feed the poor. Are their names published? No. The newspapers reason thus—'Here

is a gentleman; let us treat him as one.' We have no professional philanthropists in Italy. After all," he added, "mere giving is the lowest form of charity. If all the wealth of the world were divided the world would be debauched. Binding up wounds, pouring in oil and wine, bringing the wronged man to an inn, giving him your companionship, your sympathy, so that he shows his heart to you and lets you heal its bruises—that is your true charity."

"That's what I'm telling Nora," exclaimed Miss O'Kelly; "she's forever drawing checks. There was my nephew, Nora's cousin, Phelim. He gave away all he had. He gave it to the piquet players in the Kildare Club. 'Aunt Molly,' he said to me, 'piquet has cost me fifteen thousand pounds, and I am just beginning to learn the game. Now that I know it a bit,

no one will play with me. Your bread cast on the waters may come back, but it's ten to one it comes back mouldy, from the voyage.' Phelim is the flower of the family, your imminence. He is six foot three. He was out twice before he was two-and-twenty. The first time was with Liftennant Doyle of the Enniskillens. 'T was about a slip of a girl that they both fancied. The Liftennant fired at the word and missed. 'Try your second barrel,' called Phelim, 'I'm still within bounds' (that's pigeon-shootin' talk, your imminence). The Liftennant laughed and the two went off to the club, arm in arm, and they stayed there two days. There's waiters in the club yet, that remembers it. The next time Phelim was out, 't was with a little attorney-man from Cork, named Crawford. There was no girl this time; 't was more serious; 't was about a horse Phelim had

sold, and the little attorney-man had served a writ, and Phelim went down to Cork and pulled the little man's nose. Whin the word was given the attorney-man fired and nicked Phelim's ear. Phelim raised his pistol, slow as married life, and covered the little man. 'Take off your hat!' called Phelim. The little man obeyed, white as paper, and shakin' like a leaf. 'Was the horse sound?' called Phelim. 'He was,' said the little man. 'Was he six years old?' called Phelim. 'At least,' said the little man. 'None of your quibbles,' called Phelim. 'He was six, to a minute,' said the little man, looking into the pistol. 'Was he chape at the price?' asked Phelim. 'He was a gift,' said the attorney. 'Gentlemen,' says Phelim, 'you have heard this dyin' confession—we will now seal it,' and he sent a bullet through the attorney-man's hat. I had it all from Dr. Clancey,

who was out with them. They sent Phelim to Parliament after that, but he took the Chiltern Hundreds and came home. He said his duties interfered with the snipe-shootin'. You'd like Phelim, your imminence."

"I am sure I should," said the cardinal.

"He's in love with Nora," said Miss O'Kelly.

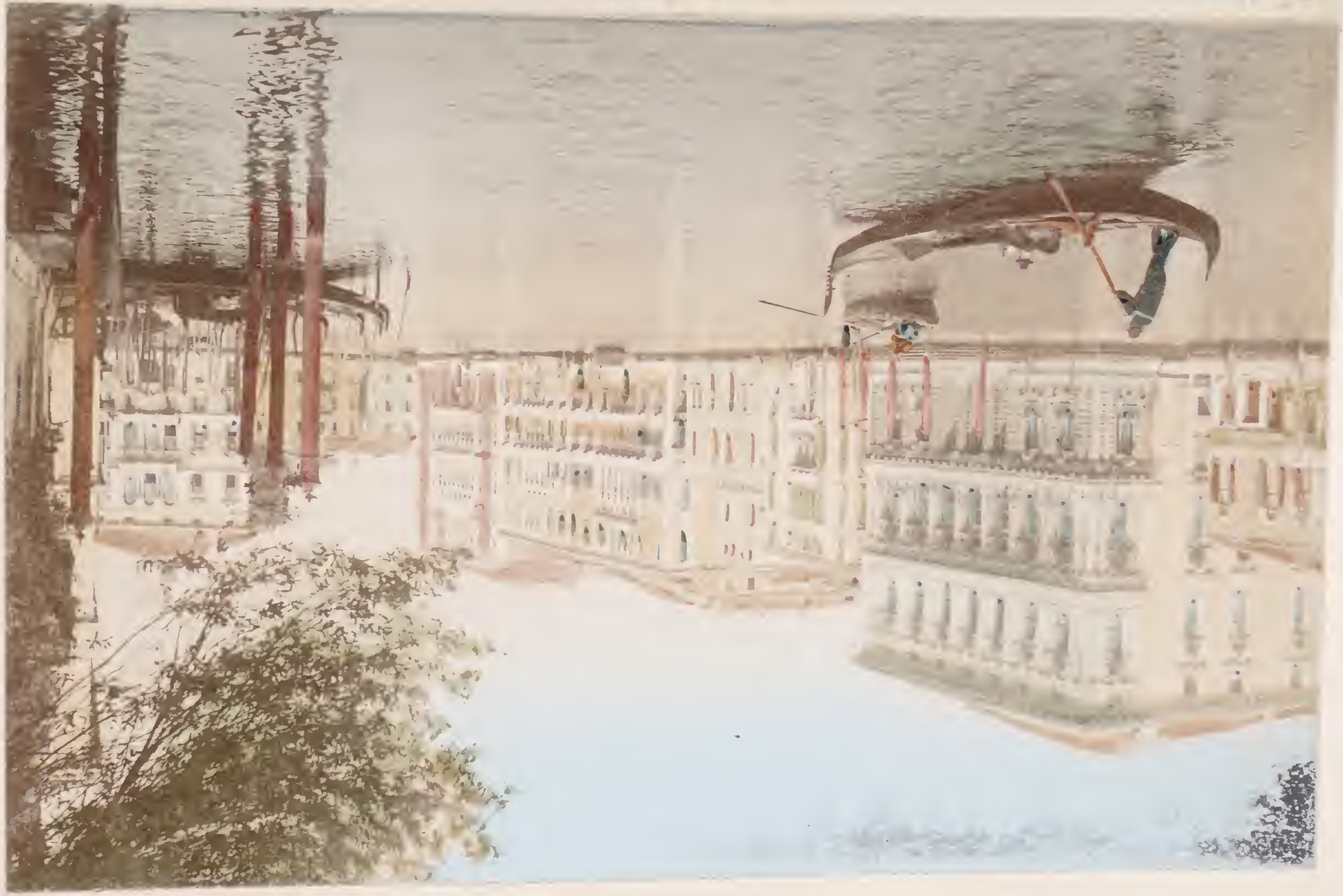
"Ah," said the cardinal, "I spoke too quickly."

Meanwhile the shadows began to creep across the deck. The cardinal rose from his chair.

"At what hour do you dine?" he asked.

"I made the hour early when I heard you order your barca for nine," said Lady Nora; "I said half-past seven."

"Then," said the cardinal, "I should excuse you, but I do it reluctantly. I am keeping you from your toilet."



Miss O'Kelly laughed. "Your immi-nence," she said, "when a woman reaches my age it takes her some time to dress. I told you I was two-and-twenty. It will take my maid nearly an hour to make me look it," and, with a courtesy, she went below.

Lady Nora stayed behind. "Your emi-nence," she said, "the evening will be fine; shall we dine on deck?"

"That will be charming," said the car-dinal.

"Whenever you wish to go to your room," said Lady Nora, "you have but to press this button, and the head steward will come." She still loitered. "I think it very likely," she said, hesitating, "that the Earl of Vauxhall will drop in; he often does. I should have mentioned it be-fore, but I was so delighted at your stay-ing that I forgot all about him."

"My dear lady," said the cardinal, "to

supplant the Earl of Vauxhall in your thoughts is great honor."

She looked at him quickly, blushed, cast down her eyes, and began, nervously, to play with a gold boat-whistle that hung at her belt. When she had exhausted the possibilities of the whistle she looked up again, and the cardinal saw that there were tears upon her cheeks. When she knew that he had seen them she disregarded them, and threw up her head, proudly.

"Yes," she said, "I think of him far too often; so often that it makes me angry, it makes me ashamed. He is an earl; he is tall and straight and beautiful and clean, and—he loves me—I know it," she exclaimed, her face illumined; "but why," she went on, "should I give myself to him on these accounts? Why should he not earn me? Why does he compel me

to so one-sided a bargain? I, too, am tall and straight and clean, and not ill-favored, and, in addition, I have that curse of unmarried women—I have money. Why does he not *do* something to even up the transaction? Why does he not write a page that some one will read? Why does he not write a song that some one will sing? Why does he not do something that will make the world call me his wife, instead of calling him my husband? The other day, when he and love were tugging at me, I told him I would marry him if he brought me the turquoise cup. It was an idle thing to say, but what I say I stand by. I shall never marry him unless he brings it to me. You know us Irish women. We have our hearts to contend with, but we keep our word. I set my lord a trivial task. If he really wants me he will accomplish it. I am not dear at the price."

"With true love," said the cardinal, "I do not think there is any question of price. It is an absolute surrender, without terms. I say this guardedly, for I am no expert as to this thing called human love. I recognize that it is the power that moves the world, but, for more than fifty years, I have tried to forget the world."

"Yes," cried Lady Nora, "and, but for a cruel mistake, you would have married my grandmother."

"Yes," said the cardinal, "but for a cruel mistake."

"The mistake was hers," exclaimed Lady Nora.

The cardinal threw up his hands. "It was a mistake," he said, "and it was buried fifty years ago. Why dig it up?"

"Forgive me," said Lady Nora, and she started toward the hatch.

"My child," said the cardinal, "you

say that you will not marry his lordship unless he brings you the cup. Do you hope that he will bring it?"

She looked at him a moment, the red and white roses warring in her cheeks. "Yes," she said, "I hope it, for I love him," and she put her hands to her face and ran below.

"If the earl is the man I take him to be," said the cardinal to himself, "I fear that I am about to shut my eyes to a felony," and he pressed the electric button at his side. The head steward appeared so quickly that he overheard the cardinal say—"I certainly should have done it, at his age."

V

AT six bells there was a tap on the cardinal's door.

"Come in," he said.

The head steward entered. He had exchanged the white duck of the afternoon for the black of evening. He was now the major-domo. He wore silk stockings and about his neck was a silver chain, and at the end of the chain hung a key.

"Your eminence's servant has come on board," he said.

"Pietro?" asked the cardinal.

"I do not know his name," said the steward, "but he is most anxious to see your eminence."

"Let him come in at once," said the cardinal. The steward backed out, bowing.

There was a loud knock upon the door.

"Enter," said the cardinal. Pietro came in. He carried a portmanteau.

"What is it?" exclaimed the cardinal. "Is any one dying? Am I needed?"

"No, your eminence," said Pietro, "the public health is unusually good. I have come to dress you for dinner with the English."

"They are not English," said the cardinal; "they are Irish."

"In that event," said Pietro, "you will do as you are."

"No," laughed the cardinal, "since you have brought my finery I will put it on."

Pietro opened the portmanteau with a sigh. "I thought they were English," he said. "The Irish are as poor as the Italians. If I dress your eminence as I had intended they will not appreciate it."

"Do not fear," said the cardinal. "Do your best."

At seven bells there was another knock at the cardinal's door. Pietro opened it.

"Shall dinner be served, your eminence?" asked the head steward.

"Whenever the ladies are ready," replied the cardinal.

"They are already on deck, your eminence."

"At once, then," said the cardinal, and he went up the companion-way, leaning on Pietro's arm. The after-deck was lighted by scores of incandescent lamps, each shaded by a scarlet silken flower. The table stood, white and cool, glittering with silver and crystal. In its centre was a golden vase, and in the vase were four scarlet roses. The deck was covered with a scarlet carpet, a strip of which ran forward to the galley-hatch, so that the service might be noiseless.

Lady Nora was dressed in white and

wore no jewels. Miss O'Kelly was partially clad in a brocaded gown, cut as low as even the indiscretion of age permits. A necklace of huge yellow topazes emphasized the space they failed to cover.

The cardinal came into the glow of the lights. His cassock was black, but its hem, its buttons, and the pipings of its seams were scarlet; so were his stockings; so was the broad silk sash that circled his waist; so were the silk gloves, thrust under the sash; so was the birettina, the little skull-cap that barely covered his crown and left to view a fringe of white hair and the rebellious lock upon his forehead. The lace at his wrists was Venice point. His pectoral cross was an antique that would grace the Louvre. Pietro had done his work well.

The cardinal came into the zone of light, smiling. "Lady Nora," he said. "Ireland is the home of the fairies. When

I was there I heard much of them. Early in the morning I saw rings in the dew-laden grass and was told that they had been made by the 'little people,' dancing. You, evidently, have caught a fairy prince and he does your bidding. Within an hour you have converted the after-deck into fairy-land; you have—"

Just then, out of the blue darkness that lay between the yacht and Venice, burst the lights of a gondola. They darted alongside and, a moment after, the Earl of Vauxhall came down the deck.

"Serve at once," whispered Lady Nora to the major-domo.

"Pardon me, your eminence," she said, "you were saying—"

"I was merely remarking," said the cardinal, "that you seem to have a fairy prince ready to do your bidding. It seems that I was right. Here he is."

Lady Nora smiled. "What kept you, Bobby," she said, "a business engagement, or did you fall asleep?"

"Neither," said the earl; "I lost a shirt-stud."

"Your eminence is served," said the major-domo.

They stood while the cardinal said grace, at the conclusion of which, all, except the earl, crossed themselves.

"Was it a valuable jewel, my lord?" asked Miss O'Kelly, in an interval of her soup.

"No," said the earl; "a poor thing, but mine own."

"How did it happen?" asked Miss O'Kelly; "did your man stale it?"

"Dear, no," said the earl; "it happened while I was putting on my shirt."

Miss O'Kelly blushed, mentally, and raised her napkin to her face.

"It twisted out of my fingers," continued the earl, "and rolled away, somewhere. I moved every piece of furniture in the room; I got down on all fours and squinted along the floor; I went to the dressing-table to look for another; my man, after putting out my things, had locked up everything and gone to his dinner. I couldn't dine with you, like freedom, 'with my bosom bare'—"

"No," said Miss O'Kelly, glancing down at her topazes, "you couldn't do that."

"Certainly not," said the earl, "and so I put on my top-coat and went out to Testolini's in the Piazza, and bought a stud. I was lucky to find them open, for it was past closing time. They told me they were working late on a hurry order. I put the stud in my shirt, raced across to the molo, jumped into a gondola, and here I am. Am

I forgiven?"

"Yes," said Lady Nora; "you were only five minutes late and your excuse is, at least, ingenious. You could not have come unadorned."

"Unadorned!" exclaimed the earl; "it was a question of coming unfastened."

Pietro began to refill the cardinal's glass, but his master stopped him. Pietro bent and whispered. The cardinal laughed. "Pietro tells me," he said, "that this is better wine than that which I get at home and that I should make the most of it. The only difference I remark in wines is that some are red and some are white."

"That minds me of one night when Father Flynn dropped in to dine," said Miss O'Kelly—"'t was he had the wooden leg, you remember, Nora, dear—and he and Phelim sat so late that I wint in with fresh candles. 'I call that good whiskey,' says

the father as I came in. 'Good whiskey?' exclaimed Phelim; 'did ever you see any whiskey that was *bad*.' 'Now that you mintion it,' says his riverince, 'I never did; but I've seen some that was scarce.' 'Another bottle, Aunt Molly,' says Phelim, 'his riverince has a hollow leg.' When I came back with the bottle they were talking to a little, wild gossoon from the hills. He was barefooted, bareheaded, and only one suspinder was between him and the police. 'Is your mother bad?' asked his riverince. 'Dochtor says she'll die afore mornin',' says the gossoon. 'Will you lind me a horse, Phelim?' asked his riverince. 'You ride a horse, with that leg!' says Phelim. 'No, I'll drive you, in the cart;' and he went off to the stables. In five minutes he came back with the dog-cart and the gray mare. His riverince got up, with the aid of a chair, the little gossoon

climbed up behind, and the gravel flew as the gray mare started. They wint a matter of ten rods and then I saw the lamps again. They had turned, and they stopped before the porch—the gray mare on her haunches. 'Phelim,' I says, 'what ails you, you've a light hand whin you're sober.' His riverince leaned over and whispered —'The oil cruet, Miss Molly, and don't let the gossoon see it.' I wint in, came out with the cruet in a paper, and handed it to him. 'All right, Phelim,' he says, and the gray mare started. At six in the mornin' I heard the gravel crunch, and I wint to the door. There stood the gray mare, her head down, and her tail bobbin'. 'You've over-driven her, Phelim,' says I. 'Perhaps,' says he, 'but I knew you were sittin' up for me. The curse of Ireland,' says he, 'is that her women sit up for her men.' 'How is the poor woman?' I says.

'She's dead,' says Phelim; 'Father Flynn is waiting for the neighbors to come.' 'And the little gossoon?' says I. Phelim leaned down from the dog-cart; 'Aunt Molly,' says he, 'we can't afford to keep what we have already, can we?' 'No,' says I. 'Thin,' says Phelim, 'we can just as well afford to keep one more; so I told him to come to us, after the funeral.'"

"I don't quite follow that reasoning," said the earl.

"I am more sure than ever, that I should like Phelim," said the cardinal. "Why do you not have him on?"

"He's six foot three," explained Miss O'Kelly; "the yacht wouldn't fit him. He couldn't stand up, below. There is six foot seven between decks, but the electric lights project four inches. Then the beds —there isn't one more than six foot six. We had Phelim on board and tried him.

He stayed one night. 'Aunt Molly,' he said, in the mornin', 'Nora has a beautiful boat, plenty of towels, and a good cook. I should like to go with you, but I'm scared. I kept awake last night, with my knees drawn up, and all went well, but if ever I fall asleep and straighten out, I'll kick the rudder out of her.' We could n't have Phelim aboard, your imminence; he'd cancel the marine insurance."

While Miss O'Kelly had been running on, the cardinal had been politely listening. He had also been discreetly observing. He had the attribute of politicians and ecclesiastics—he could exercise all his senses together. While he was smiling at Miss O'Kelly he had seen Lady Nora take from the gold vase one of the scarlet roses, press it, for an instant, to her lips and then, under cover of the table, pass it to the earl. He had seen the earl slowly lift the

rose to his face, feigning to scent it while he kissed it. He had seen quick glances, quivering lips that half-whispered, half-kissed; he had seen the wireless telegraphy of love flashing messages which youth thinks are in cipher, known only to the sender and the recipient; and he, while laughing, had tapped the wire and read the correspondence.

"It is all over," he said to himself. "They are in love. The little naked boy with the bow has hit them both."

Promptly at nine, Pietro announced the barca. The cardinal made his adieus. "My lord," he said to the earl, "if you are for the shore, I should be honored by your company."

"Thank you," said the earl, "but I ordered my gondola at ten."

Lady Nora and the earl stood watching the cardinal's lantern as it sped toward

Venice. It was soon lost in the night. Lady Nora's hand rested upon the rail. The earl covered it with his own. She did not move.

"Have you bought the cup, Bobby," she asked.

"Not yet," he answered, "but I shall have it. The treasury is closed for the annual cleaning."

"When you bring it," she said, "you will find me here. I should like you to give it me on the Tara. There is your gondola light. Aunt Molly seems to be asleep in her chair. You need not wake her to say good-night."

"I sha'n't," said the earl.

Her hand still rested upon the rail—his hand still covered hers. She was gazing across the harbor at the countless lights of Venice. The warm night breeze from the lagoon dimpled the waters of the harbor until the reflected lights began to

tremble. There was no sound, save the tinkle of the water against the side and the faint cry of a gondolier, in the distance.

"Bobby," said Lady Nora, finally, "it is nice to be here, just you and I."

He made a quick motion to take her in his arms, but she started back. "No, no," she said, "not yet; not till you earn me. There may be many a slip 'twixt the cup and"—she put her fingers to her lips.

Miss O'Kelly's chin fell upon her topazes so sharply that she wakened with a start.

"Nora, darlin'?" she cried, looking about her.

"Here I am," said Lady Nora, coming into the light.

"Ah," said her aunt, "and Lord Robert, too. I thought he had gone. I must have had forty winks."

"I was only waiting," said the earl, "to bid you good-night."

"An Irishman," said Miss O'Kelly, "would have taken advantage of me slumbers, and would have kissed me hand."

"An Englishman will do it when you are awake," said the earl.

"That's nice," said Miss O'Kelly; "run away home now, and get your beauty-sleep."

VI

DURING the following week the cardinal was so occupied with his poor that he nearly forgot his rich. He saw the yacht whenever he took his barca at the molo, and once, when he was crossing the Rialto, he caught a glimpse of Lady Nora and her aunt, coming up the canal in their gondola.

As for the earl, he haunted St. Mark's. Many times each day he went to the treasury only to find it locked. The sacristan could give him no comfort. "Perhaps to-morrow, my lord," he would say when the earl put his customary question; "it is the annual cleaning, and sometimes a jewel needs resetting, an embroidery to be repaired—all this takes time—perhaps to-morrow. Shall I uncover the Palo

d'Oro, my lord, or light up the alabaster column; they are both very fine?" And the earl would turn on his heel and leave the church, only to come back in an hour to repeat his question and receive his answer.

One day the earl spoke out—"Tommaso," he said, "you are not a rich man, I take it?"

"My lord," replied Tommaso, "I am inordinately poor. Are you about to tempt me?"

The earl hesitated, blushed, and fumbled in his pocket. He drew out a handful of notes.

"Take these," he said, "and open the treasury."

"Alas, my lord," said Tommaso, "my virtue is but a battered thing, but I must keep it. I have no key."

The earl went out and wandered

through the arcades. He came upon Lady Nora and Miss O'Kelly. They were looking at Testolini's shop-windows. Lady Nora greeted him with a nod—Miss O'Kelly with animation.

"I'm havin' a struggle with me conscience," she said.

So was the earl.

"Do ye see that buttherfly?" continued Miss O'Kelly, putting her finger against the glass; "it's marked two hundred lire, and that's eight pounds. I priced one in Dublin, just like it, and it was three hundred pounds. They don't know the value of diamonds in Italy. I've ten pounds that I got from Phelim yesterday, in a letther. He says there's been an Englishman at the Kildare Club for three weeks, who thought he could play piquet. Phelim is travellin' on the Continent. Now, the question in me mind is, shall I pay Father Flynn the

ten pounds I promised him, a year ago Easter, or shall I buy the buttherfly? It would look illigant, Nora, dear, with me blue bengaline."

Lady Nora laughed. "I am sure, Aunt Molly," she said, "that Phelim would rather you bought the butterfly. I'll take care of your subscription to Father Flynn."

With an exclamation of joy, Miss O'Kelly ran into the shop.

"Nora," said the earl, "the treasury is still closed."

"Oh," said Lady Nora, "why do you remind me of such tiresome things as the treasury? Didn't you hear Aunt Molly say that Phelim is on the Continent? I had a wire from him this morning. Read it; it's quite Irish."

She handed the earl a telegram.

"Shall I read it?" he asked.

"Of course," she answered.

He read—"*I'm richer, but no shorter. Is there a hotel in Venice big enough to take me in? Wire answer.* PHELIM."

"Will you send this reply for me?" she asked, when the earl had read Phelim's telegram.

"To be sure I will," he said.

"How many words are there?" she asked. "I'll pay for it."

Thus compelled, the earl read her answer—"*Come, rich or poor, long or short. Come.* NORA."

The earl went off with the telegram, thinking.

The next afternoon the earl came out of the church—his fifth visit since ten o'clock—and there, near the fountain, were Lady Nora and her aunt. The earl marked them from the church steps. There was no mistaking Miss O'Kelly's green parasol.

This time Lady Nora met him with animation. She even came toward him, her face wreathed in smiles.

"Phelim has come!" she exclaimed.

"Quite happy—I'm sure," said the earl. "He's prompt, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Lady Nora, "he's always prompt. He doesn't lose shirt-studs, and he never dawdles."

"Ah!" said the earl.

"Here he comes!" exclaimed Lady Nora, and she began to wave her handkerchief.

The earl turned and saw, coming from the corner by the clock-tower, a man. He had the shoulders of Hercules, the waist of Apollo, the legs of Mercury. When he came closer, hat in hand, the earl saw that he had curling chestnut locks, a beard that caressed his chin, brown eyes, and white teeth, for he was smiling.

"Nora," he cried, as he came within distance, "your friend the cardinal is a good one. He puts on no side. He had me up on the balcony, opened your letter, took out the check, and read the letter before even he looked at the stamped paper. When a man gets a check in a letter and reads the letter before he looks at the check, he shows breedin'."

"The Earl of Vauxhall," said Lady Nora, "I present Mr. Phelim Blake."

The two men nodded; the earl, guardedly; Phelim, with a smile.

"I think, my lord," said Phelim, "that you are not in Venice for her antiquities. No more am I. I arrived this mornin' and I've been all over the place already. I was just thinkin' that time might hang. Twice a day I've to go out to the yacht to propose to Nora. Durin' the intervals we might have a crack at piquet."

The earl was embarrassed. He was not accustomed to such frankness. He was embarrassed also by the six feet three of Phelim. He himself was only six feet.

"I do not know piquet," he said.

"Ah," said Phelim, "it cost me much to learn what I know of it, and I will gladly impart that little for the pleasure of your companionship. I will play you for love."

The earl took counsel with himself—"So long as he is playing piquet with me," he said to himself, "so long he cannot be making love to Nora."

"How long will it take me to learn the game?" he asked.

"As long," answered Phelim, "as you have ready money. When you begin to give due bills you have begun to grasp the rudiments of the game."

"Then," said the earl, "I shall be an

apt pupil, for I shall give an I O U the first time I lose."

"In piquet," said Phelim, squaring himself, and placing the index finger of his right hand in his left hand, after the manner of the didactic, "the great thing is the discard, and your discard should be governed by two considerations—first, to better your own hand, and second, to cripple your opponent's. Your moderate player never thinks of this latter consideration. His only thought is to better his own hand. He never discards an ace. The mere size of it dazzles him, and he will keep aces and discard tens, forgetting that you cannot have a sequence of more than four without a ten, and that you can have one of seven without the ace, and that a king is as good as an ace, if the latter is in the discard. I am speakin' now," continued Phelim, "of the beginner. Let us

suppose one who has spent one thousand pounds on the game, and is presumed to have learned somethin' for his money. His fault is apt to be that he sacrifices too much that he may count cards. I grant you that you cannot count sixty or ninety if your opponent has cards, but you may, if cards are tied. When I was a beginner I used to see Colonel Mellish make discards, on the mere chance of tyin' the cards, that seemed to me simply reckless. I soon discovered, however, that they were simply scientific. One more thing—always remember that there is no average card in a piquet pack. The average is halfway between the ten-spot and the knave. Now, what are the chances of the junior hand discardin' a ten and drawin' a higher card? In the Kildare Club they are understood to be two and three-eighths to one against, although Colonel Mellish claims

they are two and five-eighths to one. The colonel is an authority, but I think he is a trifle pessimistic. He—"

"There, Phelim," said Lady Nora, "I think that is enough for the first lesson. We dine at eight. If Lord Vauxhall has nothing better to do perhaps he will come with you."

"We'll dine on deck, Phelim, dear," said Miss O'Kelly. "You won't have to go below."

VII

THE next morning the earl went to the church, as usual. He had not slept well. The advent of Phelim had set him to thinking. Here was a rival; and a dangerous one. He admitted this grudgingly, for an Englishman is slow to see a rival in a foreigner, and who so foreign as an Irishman?

At dinner, on the yacht, the night before, Phelim had been much in evidence. His six feet three had impressed the earl's six feet. Phelim had been well dressed. "Confound him," thought the earl, "he goes to Poole, or Johns & Pegg. Why doesn't he get his clothes at home?" Then Phelim had talked much, and he had talked well. He had told stories at which the earl had been compelled to

laugh. He had related experiences of his home-life, of the peasants, the priests, the clubs, hunting and shooting, his brief stay in Parliament, what he had seen in Venice during the last few days; and, when dinner was over, Lady Nora, who had been all attention, said: "Sing for us, Phelim," and they had gone below, Phelim stooping to save his head; and he had struck those mysterious chords upon the piano, by way of prelude, that silence talk, that put the world far away, that set the men to glancing at the women, and the women to glancing at the floor and making sure of their handkerchiefs, and then—he had sung.

How can one describe a song? As well attempt to paint a perfume.

When Phelim finished singing Miss O'Kelly went over and kissed him, and Lady Nora went away, her eyes glistening.

The earl remembered all these things as he went up the aisle. He had passed that way five times each day for nine days. He came to the door of the treasury, thinking, not of Nora, but of Phelim —and the door was open.

He went in. The gorgeous color of the place stopped him, on the threshold. He saw the broidered vestments upon which gold was the mere background; jacinths were the stamens of the flowers, and pierced diamonds were the dewdrops on their leaves; he saw the chalices and patens of amethyst and jade, the crucifixes of beaten gold, in which rubies were set solid, as if they had been floated on the molten metal; he saw the seven-light candelabrum, the bobèches of which were sliced emeralds, and then his eyes, groping in this wilderness of beauty, lighted on the turquoise cup.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "she is right. She is selling herself for the most beautiful thing in the world. To steal it is a crime like Cromwell's—too great to be punished," and he put out his hand.

Then, with the cup and Nora within his reach, he heard a still, small voice, and his hand fell.

He began to argue with his conscience. "Who owns this cup?" he asked. "No one. The cardinal said it had been stolen. He said no one could sell it because no one could give title. Why, then, is it not mine as well as any one's? If I take it, whom do I wrong? Great men have never let trifles of right and wrong disturb their conduct. Who would ever have won a battle if he had taken thought of the widows? Who would ever have attained any great thing if he had not despised small things?" and he put out his hand

again; and then came surging into his mind the provisions of that code which birth, associations, his school life, and, most of all, his mother, had taught him. What would they say and do at his clubs? Where, in all the world, could he hide himself, if he did this thing? He turned and fled, and, running down the church steps, he came face to face with Lady Nora and Phelim. They were laughing gayly; but, when they saw the earl's face, their laughter ceased.

"Have you seen a ghost, my lord?" asked Phelim.

The earl did not answer; he did not even hear. He stood gazing at Lady Nora. For one brief moment, when he stood before the cup, he had questioned whether a woman who would impose such a condition could be worth winning; and now, before her, her beauty overwhelmed him.

He forgot Phelim; he forgot the passers-by; he forgot everything, except the woman he loved—the woman he had lost.

"Nora," he said, "I give you back your promise. I cannot give you the cup."

The color left her cheeks and her hands flew up to her heart—she gazed at him with love and pity in her eyes, and then, suddenly, her cheeks flamed, her white teeth pressed her lower lip, her little foot stamped upon the pavement.

"Very well," she said, "I regret having given you so much trouble;" and she went toward the landing. She took three steps and then turned. The two men stood as she had left them.

"Phelim," she said, smiling, "*you* would do something for me, if I were to ask you, would you not?"

"Try me," said Phelim. "Would you like the Campanile for a paper-weight?"

"No," she said, "not that, but something else. Come here."

He went to her, and she whispered in his ear.

"I'll bring it you in half an hour, aboard the yacht," said Phelim, and he started across the Piazza.

Lady Nora went on toward the landing. The earl stood watching her. She did not look back. The earl looked up at the clock-tower. "In half an hour," he said to himself, "he will bring it to her, aboard the yacht;" and he turned and re-entered the church. He went up the aisle, nodded to the sacristan, entered the treasury, took the turquoise cup, came out with it in his hand, nodded again to the sacristan, went down the steps, crossed the Piazza, ran down the landing-stairs, and jumped into a gondola.

"To the English yacht!" he cried.

He looked at his watch. "It seems," he said to himself, "that one can join the criminal classes in about six minutes. I've twenty-four the start of Phelim."

They came alongside the Tara, and the earl sprang up the ladder.

"Lady Nora?" he asked of the quartermaster.

"She is below, my lord. She has just come aboard, and she left orders to show you down, my lord."

"Me?" exclaimed the earl.

"She didn't name you, my lord;" said the quartermaster, "what she said was—'A gentleman will come on board soon; show him below.'"

The earl speculated a moment as to whether he were still a gentleman, and then went down the companion-way. He came to the saloon. The door was open. He looked in. Lady Nora was seated at

the piano, but her hands were clasped in her lap. Her head was bent and the earl noticed, for the thousandth time, how the hair clustered in her neck and framed the little, close-set ear. He saw the pure outlines of her shoulders; beneath the bench, he saw her foot in its white shoe; he saw, or felt, he could not have told you which, that here was the one woman in all this great world. To love her was a distinction. To sin for her was a dispensation. To achieve her was a coronation.

He tapped on the door. The girl did not turn, but she put her hands on the keys quickly, as if ashamed to have them found idle.

"Ah, Phelim," she said, "you are more than prompt; you never keep one waiting," and she began to play very softly.

The earl was embarrassed. Despite his crime, he still had breeding left him,

and he felt compelled to make his presence known. He knocked again.

"Don't interrupt me, Phelim," she said; "this is my swan-song; listen;" and she began to sing. She sang bravely, at first, with her head held high, and then, suddenly, her voice began to falter.

"Ah, Phelim, dear," she cried, "I've lost my love! I've lost my love!" and she put her hands to her face and fell to sobbing.

"Nora!" said the earl. It was the first word he had spoken, and she raised her head, startled.

"Here is the cup, Nora," he said.

She sprang to her feet and turned to him, tears on her cheeks, but a light in her eyes such as he had never seen.

"Oh, my love," she cried, "I should have known you'd bring it."

"Yes," he said, "you should have known."

She stood, blushing, radiant, eager, waiting.

He stood in the doorway, pale, quiet, his arms at his side, the cup in his hand.

"Nora," he said, "I've brought you the cup, but I do not dare to give it to you. I stole it."

"What?" she cried, running toward him. She stopped suddenly and began to laugh—a pitiful little laugh, pitched in an unnatural key. "You should n't frighten me like that, Bobby," she said; "it is n't fair."

"It is true," said the earl; "I am a thief."

She looked at him and saw that he was speaking the truth.

"No," she cried, "'t is I am the thief, not you. The cardinal warned me that I was compelling you to this, and I laughed at him. I thought that you would achieve

the cup, if you cared for me; that you would render some service to the State and claim it as your reward—that you would make a fortune, and buy it—that you would make friends at the Vatican—that you would build churches, found hospitals, that even the Holy Father might ask you to name something within his gift—I thought of a thousand schemes, such as one reads of—but I never thought you would take it. No, no; I never thought that."

"Nora," said the earl, "I didn't know how to do any of those things, and I didn't have time to learn."

"I would have waited for you, always," she said.

"I didn't know that," said the earl.

"I hoped you didn't," said Lady Nora. "Come!" and she sprang through the door. The earl followed her. They ran

up the companion-way, across the deck, down the boarding-stairs. The earl's gondola was waiting.

"To the molo in five minutes," cried Lady Nora to the poppe, "and you shall be rich."

They went into the little cabin. The earl still held the cup in his hand. They sat far apart—each longing to comfort the other—each afraid to speak. Between them was a great gulf fixed—the gulf of sin and shame.

Half-way to the landing, they passed Phelim's gondola, making for the yacht. The cabin hid them and he passed in silence.

"I sent him for some bon-bons," said Lady Nora. "I did it to make you jealous."

They reached the molo in less than five minutes and Lady Nora tossed her purse

to the oarsmen, and sprang out.

"Put the cup under your coat," she said. The earl obeyed. He had stolen it openly. He brought it back hidden. They crossed the Piazza as rapidly as they dared, and entered the church. The sacristan greeted them with a smile and led the way to the treasury.

"They haven't missed it yet," whispered Lady Nora.

The sacristan unlocked the outer and the inner door, bowed, and left them.

Lady Nora seized the cup and ran to its accustomed shelf. She had her hand outstretched to replace it, when she uttered a cry.

"What is it?" exclaimed the earl.

She did not answer, but she pointed, and the earl, looking where she pointed, saw, on the shelf—the turquoise cup.

They stared at the cup on the shelf—

at the cup in Lady Nora's hand—and at each other—dumfounded.

They heard a limping step on the pavement and the cardinal came in. His face was very grave, but his voice was very gentle.

"My children," he said, "I prayed God that you would bring back the cup, but, *mea culpa*, I lacked faith, and dared not risk the original. Would God let Nora Blake's granddaughter make shipwreck? The cup you have, my child, is but silver-gilt and glass, but it may serve, some other day, to remind you of this day. Look at it when your pride struggles with your heart. Perhaps the sight of it may strengthen you. Take it, not as the present of a cardinal, or an archbishop, but as the wedding-gift of an old man who once was young, and once knew Nora Blake."

"A wedding-gift?" exclaimed Lady

Nora. "What man would ever marry such a wretch as I?"

"Nora!" cried the earl; and he held out his arms.

"My pigeons are waiting for me," said the cardinal; and he went away, limping.

SPECIAL
86-B
24873

THE GETTY CENTER
LIBRARY

J.B.D.